

THE

LETTERS

# SHEKEL



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A large, dark, irregularly shaped object, likely a Nazi numismatic relic, resting on a white surface. It has a textured, ribbed base and a central, lighter-colored, circular or floral-like pattern.

**ONE FAMILY'S HOLOCAUST RELIC  
OF THE NAZI NUMISMATIC POLICY**

**SEE PAGE SIX**



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The AMERICAN ISRAEL NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION is a cultural and educational organization dedicated to the study and collection of Israel's coinage, past and present, and all aspects of Judaica Numismatica. It is a democratically organized, membership oriented group, chartered as a non-profit association under the laws of the State of New York.

As an educational organization, the primary responsibility is the development of programs, publications, meeting and other activities which will bring news, history, technical, social and related background to the study of numismatics. Membership is open to all men and women of goodwill and to clubs who share the common goals of the Association.

The Association is the publisher of THE SHEKEL, a quarterly journal and news magazine prepared for the enlightenment and education of the membership. It neither solicits or accepts advertising, paid or unpaid. Its views are the views and opinions of the writers and the pages and columns are open to all who submit material deemed by the editors to be of interest to the members.

The Association sponsors such major cultural/social/numismatic events as an annual Study Tour of Israel, national and regional conventions and such other activities and enterprises which will benefit the members. Dues are paid annually at \$10.00 per year; life memberships are offered to all at \$150.00. Junior membership (under 18) \$2.50 per year. Your interest and participation will be welcomed by any of the affiliated clubs or as a general member of the Association.

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# THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**Morris Bram**

Dear Friends,

Start off the new year by working on all those good resolutions you made for 1987. Don't forget the important resolution to renew your AINA membership! If you promised also to bring in at least one new member this year, make it your top priority.

Now that winter is upon us, coin club meetings should be enjoying some of their best attendance. But, if your club is beset by constantly poor turnouts by its members, or if membership is declining, then it may be time to inject new life and interest into the meetings. Write to AINA, care of Club-Coordinator; we will be glad to help with any problem.

Preparations are already being made for our annual May New York Convention. It is not too early to "think spring". Mark your calendar and join us in New York April 30-May 3, 1987 at the Omni Park Central Hotel. More details will follow shortly.

We are proud to tell all that 1987 is AINA's 20th Anniversary. AINA's wish is to have something for everyone—fellowship through club meetings and seminars, coins and medals for collectors, conventions to bring all of us together, a marvelous educational publication, an Israel Tour, slide lectures, and for the budding young collector . . . a youth program. Isn't this what numismatics is all about?

**WELCOME ALL OUR OLD MEMBERS! WELCOME ALL OUR NEW MEMBERS!**

Just a thought for the New Year: "Judge not the bottle, but its contents."

Shalom,

*Morris*



## The Treasure Finders of Westchester

By Philip Sperber

Two members of the Westchester Israel Numismatic Society (W.I.N.S.) of New York recently found ancient and medieval coins in widely separated and wildly improbable places. Both finds were made by past presidents of this coin club—Philip Sperber and Fred Jacobs—with the span of a few weeks.

Philip Sperber had his two grandsons, six and eight years old, visiting with him—Matthew and Barry Reiswerg. They had come alone from Indianapolis during a school vacation. One evening they asked to see Grandpa's collection of ancient coins. Sperber obliged by bringing out a tray which included Roman denarii and bronzes. They were very impressed by the age of the coins. They repeatedly asked the age of specific coins. A pleasant hour was spent in this manner.

For their return flight they were taken to the New York's Kennedy Airport. After check-in, there was some time to be whiled away before boarding. Spotting an ice cream shop in the lounge area, Sperber suggested cones to the children, an idea accepted with enthusiasm. While he

waited to pay for the ice cream, the two children stood nearby.

When they emerged, Matthew said, "Grandpa, I think I found a Roman coin." He placed a small bronze disc in Sperber's hand. Sure enough, it was a Roman coin.

Matthew said he had found it on the counter of the ice cream shop! Naturally, his first question was, "How old it is?" Sperber could see that the coin was late Roman, in the style of those minted after the reign of Constantine the Great. He ventured that the coin was probably from about the year 350 C.E. He told Matthew that he would hold the coin, clean it, identify it and then send it on to him with its story.

The coin cleaned up nicely, but the obverse legend was gone. However, the reverse was very fine and easily read, since it contained only lettering within a wreath.

It started VOT. XX, MVLT. XXX. (I have made 20 vows and I will make 30 more.) With this information it was easy to identify the coin from a catalog as being one minted by Constantius II, one of the sons of Constantine, who reigned from 337 to



361. Matthew is now the proud owner of this coin.

While engaged in identifying the coin, Sperber came across several ancient coins lying in a desk drawer. These were identified coins that he had had for months or years; he had made only half-hearted attempts to attribute. With indistinct legends and reverses they were hard to pin down. However, he was struck by the similarity of the portrait to that of Matthew's coin. Scanning the list of reverses in the catalog for this Emperor, and by using a little imagination regarding the design, he was able to identify the coin as one of Constantius II. This coin was sent to Barry, now each child has his own Roman coin.

How did a Roman coin end up on the counter of an ice cream shop in Kennedy Airport? Perhaps it dropped from a handful of change.

Maybe it was discarded as a worthless "foreign coin." We'll never know for certain. But only a little exposure enabled a sharp-eyed youngster to spot it and recognize it for what it was.

#### **From the Briny Deep**

This tale was related at one of our WINS meetings. Fred Jacobs heard this only a few weeks before a vacation trip to Bermuda. Upon his return, he couldn't wait to visit Sperber to relate his own coin find. He had recovered a medieval coin from the sea floor at Bermuda! While snorkeling, he spotted an object too round and too shiny to be a pebble. He dove down about eight feet and retrieved a grey disc that was obviously an encrusted coin. He couldn't wait to get home, clean it and attribute it.

It proved to be a coin of Henry VI of England, who reigned from 1422 to 1461 and from 1470 to 1471. (During the War of the Roses the Kings were bounced about a bit.) The coin was one of his Anglo-Gallic series. It was minted in France for his French subjects. (In those days the English had territories in France.)

The intriguing question arises. How did a coin minted in France during the middle 1400's find its way to the sea floor off Bermuda? How long had it lain there? The likeliest answer to the first part of the question is that it was most likely a shipwreck relic. Bermuda is ringed by reefs and the sea floor is dotted with shipwrecks. The first of these was suffered by Juan de Bermudez, discoverer of the island in 1509. Another famous shipwreck was that of Sir George Somers in 1609. He was leading a fleet of nine ships with relief supplies for the infant colony of Jamestown in Virginia. This fleet was wrecked in a furious hurricane,

but all hands were saved. Tales of this storm inspired *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare. Within nine months Sir George managed to build two ships which he sailed on to Virginia.

A silver coin in those days was likely to stay in circulation for more than a hundred years: it crossed many national boundaries. The coin could have been in the pocket of a seaman of Bermudez's ship. Possibly, it was in the possession of one of Somers' sailors. Shipwrecks on Bermuda's reefs were numerous and the so-called *Bermuda Triangle* still intrigues sailors and storytellers.

The probabilities of two finds of ancient coins under the circumstances described are probably astronomically large, beyond calculation. The monetary value of the two coins is quite small, but that is of no matter. The story is all that is of importance. That and the fascinating speculations they engender are part of the lure and joys of numismatics.

## ISRAEL'S MONEY & MEDALS

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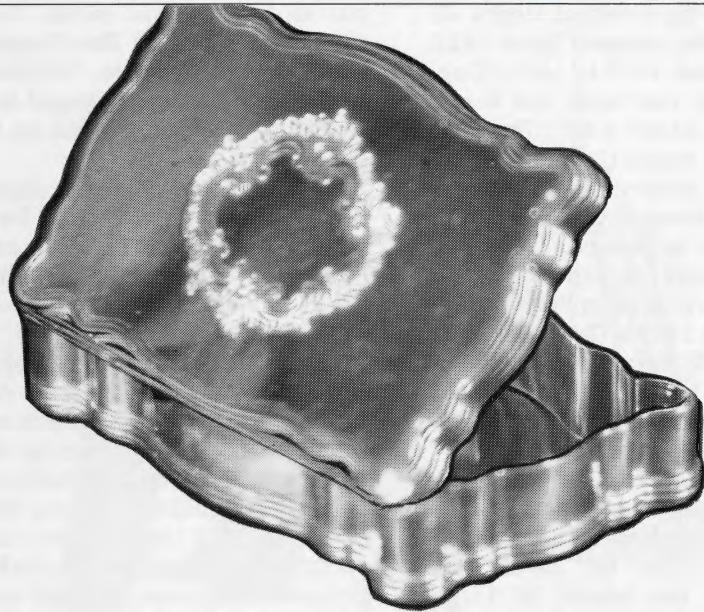
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The Candy Box from Germany in 1938 packed with sticky date meat.

## A Personal Experience with Gold Bullion

By Henry F. Kahn, Ed.D.

The popularity of gold bullion has lately grown by leaps and bounds. I have seen this popularity of gold before—almost fifty years ago. I have seen it from both a positive as well as a negative perspective. But this story begins more than sixty years ago.

In Germany in 1923 my father and gold bullion saved the family business from financial ruin. His creditors demanded payment but they refused to accept inflated paper currency. The business continued only after my father paid them with gold coins. Since that time, my father was bullish on bullion! Over a period of years he accumulated hundreds of the then-current 20 Mark coins (approx. 1/4 oz. gold), a practice followed by many who had experienced the hyperinflation in Germany during the early twenties.



German 20 Mark coin

With Nazi control of Germany in 1933, personal liberties began to erode. Soon it was forbidden to own gold coins. But people who were willing to give up their "reserve capital," or who were afraid to keep the coins, found that divestiture of gold was impossible. One simply could not escape from being accused as a "currency speculator" if one had gold coins to redeem. The penalty meted out to currency speculators was internment in a concentration camp—after the coins were confiscated.

So people kept their gold well-hidden. My father too hid his gold with the hope of somehow getting it out of Germany as we planned to emigrate to the United States in January of 1939.

But our plans changed suddenly in the Fall of 1938. "Crystal night" occurred during the night of November 9-10. As my parents and I fled Germany during this difficult period, leaving behind relatives and personal belongings, my father had to worry about the hidden gold. If the Nazis would find it, it would go badly with his relatives. So he distributed the coins among friends who assured him that the gold would be safe with them. Some promised to find a way to surreptitiously send coins out of Germany to help us start life anew in the United States. We left. I am certain today that my father had no illusions of seeing his coins again. Ownership of gold bullion in Germany in 1938 had become a very low priority; indeed, it was hazardous to one's health!

We arrived penniless in Switzerland where we could stay for a few weeks, then on to France and then to England. Each country would issue a visa for only a few days or weeks to poverty-stricken refugees who were awaiting the departure of their steamers to the United States.

A few of the many coins did reach us after we had left Germany. Perhaps more were confiscated in letters; there is no way of knowing. The German authorities randomly opened letters and parcels sent to a

foreign country. They would reseal the letters with strips of labels that read: *For currency control opened by customs*. Needless to say, senders of gold took great personal risks. Anyone caught could expect dire consequences. We were not surprised that most of the letters we received bore false or fictitious return addresses. Some letters addressed to us even had fictitious addressee names.

Late in November in 1938, a small food package reached us in Zurich. I recall that it bore no return address, but it was sent from Germany. It contained apples and oranges carefully packed in excelsior. It also contained a small box filled with dried dates. The box looked dull and dirty. It was covered with the sticky meat of the dates and the excelsior was stuck all over it. My father gave me the dates, a real treat! I had just turned 13 and loved sweets. Little did I care about the box they came in! After my mother had washed and cleaned this box, it became evident that it was NOT the kind of box one ordinarily purchased with dates!

Later I was told that among the friends in Germany to whom my father distributed the coins was the proprietor of a small jewelry shop in Munich. He was also a goldsmith by trade. He had melted down some of the coins and made this box from the gold. It was a courageous thing for him to do. The weight of the box is 2-1/4 oz., so he must have used the gold of nine or ten coins. No base metal was added. Its dimensions are



# Two badges of Jewish Chaplains in the Australian Army

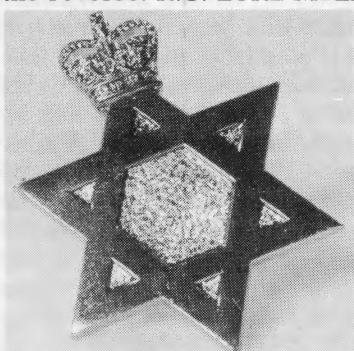
By Eli Semmelman, Haifa

I recently received two badges from a collector in Australia which suggests that Australia is rich with different Jewish numismatic items.

It is my understanding that they had to be worn on the hat of the Chaplain, but Dov Genechowsky suggests that they were worn on the sleeve.



One is of KING GEORGE VI 1936-52; bronze, 40 mm. on 30 mm. On the reverse: K.G. LUKE MELB.



The other is made of a composite metal, gilded, with the crown of Queen Elizabeth II. On the Magen David the King's crown is Haughty and the Queen's in concave.

## GOLD BULLION continued

3-1/2 inches by 2 inches by 11/16 inches. We never found out who had actually mailed the package which contained the camouflaged gold bullion.

My father kept that box as his "gold reserve" for the rest of his life,

## E. W. KANITZ, HAIFA

With deep regret I announce the death at age 86 of E. W. KANITZ, in October 1986. For years he was Secretary of the Israel Numismatic Society, Haifa Branch.

His main interest was the Flavian Dynasty. He had also collected coins of the second Jewish Temple period; the two revolts against the Roman Empire; and coins of ancient cities of Palestine.

His articles are dispersed in major numismatic publications around the World, as in England, U.S.A., Germany and Switzerland. He also lectured before the Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem numismatic societies.

Born in Vienna, in 1900, he studied in high school and the Academy of Trade, later in the Vienna University. He became comptroller of the Rothschild Bank in Vienna and a few years later of the Hermes Bank.

In 1938 he emigrated to Palestine. From 1941 to 1946 he served in the British Army in India as an Officer in the Army Paymaster's Office. He ended his working career as comptroller in the Haifa Customs Office.

He will be remembered by his numismatic colleagues for his kindness, and his deep knowledge of numismatics.

never entertaining the thought of selling it. He was, after all, bullish on bullion. The goldsmith friend who had made the box died shortly after the war. Today a large and elegant jewelry store in downtown Munich still bears his name.

# Jews and the mints of Islam



By Samuel Lachman, Haifa

This article covers the following periods:

The Orthodox Caliphs 13-41 H/634-661CE.  
The Umayyad Caliphs 41-132 H/661-750CE.  
The Abbásid Caliphs 132-656 H/749-1258CE.

## The Orthodox Caliphs

It is much in doubt if any coins were minted before the rule of the Umayyads.<sup>1</sup>

Persian drachmes called "Baghiliya" were in use in pre-Islamic times in Arabia. The name baghiliya may come from the name of the Jew who struck these coins for the first time: 'Ras al-Baghī'. Other explanations of the name of the coins are suggested.<sup>2</sup>

Franco<sup>3</sup> wrote that the Caliph Umar found 40,000 Jews in Alexandria and gave to some the monopoly to mint coins. Franco does not quote the source of this information. The Arabs entered Alexandria in September 642.<sup>4</sup> The Caliph Umar was never in Alexandria. He was murdered at Medina on 23 November 644.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that Franco confused the name of the commander of the Arab forces Amr ibn al-As<sup>6</sup> with that of the caliph.

## The Umayyad Caliphs

The first Jew connected with the mint in the Islamic World was "Sumayr," known as the minter of the post-reform Umayyad dirhem. No Hebrew chronicle mentioning him is known.

Al-Balādhuri (died 279 H/892)<sup>7</sup> writes that the assayer Dawūd, based on what was told to him by the assayer Abū Zubayr, informed him that the reformed dirhems were called 'sumayriya' after the name of the one who struck them for the first time, who was called 'Sumayr'. It can be assumed that the assayer Abū al-Zubayr died at the beginning of the 3rd/9th century.

Lane<sup>8</sup> quotes the 'dirhem sumayriya' from 'al-Muzhir fi ulum al-lugha' of al-Suyutī (died 911 H/1505) based on 'Nawadir' of Ibn al-Arabi (150-231 or 233 H/767-845/46 or 837/48).

al-Tabari (233-309 H/838-921 approximate) said:<sup>9</sup>

The new dirhems were struck for the first time by a Jew from Taima<sup>10</sup> named Sumayr. The coins were subsequently called 'sumariya'.

Maqrīzī,<sup>11</sup> died 841 H/1438, has a similar statement.

Walker<sup>12</sup> states:

The Sumairi dirhems were so called because they were first struck by a Jew named Sumair, who recommended them to Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf,<sup>13</sup> at the time of the coinage reform.

Fischel,<sup>14</sup> basing his description on Ibn al-Athir<sup>15</sup> and Maqrīzī,<sup>16</sup> presents the following story: Under the Umayyad Caliphate there arose to prominence Sumair al-Yahūdi (c. 695) who, as keeper of the Mint in



Damascus, as an expert in coins, purveyor of metals and provider of loans for the Court, served the fiscal administration for many years. Fischel's references are of the 13th and 15th century. So far no earlier supporting sources have been traced.

The earliest reformed dirhems were struck in 79 H/698-99.<sup>17</sup> Other earlier dates seem to be errors, or misreadings as explained by Walker.<sup>18</sup> In general these silver dirhems show a mint-name. There is, however, a coin dated 79 H<sup>19</sup> without mint-name. This could be the first minting. It is pointed out that all gold coins struck at Damascus beginning in 77 H are without mint-name.<sup>20</sup> The dirhem shown here was minted at Wasit (a town in lower Iraq) in 91 H.

Friedenberg's description and illustration will have to be updated as explained above.<sup>21</sup>

No further particulars about Jewish mint activities during the Umayyad period have so far turned up. It should, however, be noted, that quite a number of Umayyad copper fulūs bear ancient Jewish emblems.<sup>22</sup>

### The Abbāsid Caliphs

With regard to the employment of Jews in the mints of the early Abbāsid period no definite information is available to date. Maqrizi<sup>23</sup> wrote that before the time of the caliph

Harūn al-Rashid, the caliph himself supervised the minting. The latter caliph made his vezir Jafar b. Yahyā b. Barmak his moneyer (176-197 H/792-803). Successive caliphs followed this system. The measures taken by the caliph al-Mutawakkil (232-247 H/847-861) against the ahl al-dhimma indicate that Jews were most likely employed in government services. Ehrenkreutz states that during the reign of Harūn al-Rashid the office of nāzir al-sikka (inspector of coinage) was set up.<sup>24</sup>

Some definite information is available for the end of the Abbāsid rule, i.e. about the time of the caliph al-Nāṣir (575-622 H/1180-1225). R. Elazar b. Ya'aqov ha-Babli, who was born in Baghdad and lived there between 4955-5010/c.592-648 H/1195-1250 C.E., mentions in his *Divan*: Shmuel (Shams al-daula) ben Karate was an inspector of the Baghdad mint;<sup>25</sup> Mordekhai ben al-Karbiya, inspector of the Baghdad mint.<sup>26</sup>

Avraham Ben-Ya'aqov reports:<sup>27</sup> Abū Ghalib b. Abu Tāhir b. Shibr, who died in 601 H/1204-05, was an inspector of the Baghdad mint. He writes also that in the first half of the 13th century many Jews were inspectors of the mint.<sup>28</sup>

Benjamin of Tudela, who visited Baghdad in about 1164, mentions only religious personalities.<sup>29</sup>

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3. Moize Franco, *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites de l'Empire Ottoman*. Paris 1897. p.18.
4. Stanley Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*. London 1901. p.11 ff.
5. Carl Brockelmann, *The History of the Islamic People*. New York 1960. p.63.



## REAPPEARANCE OF A LONG LOST GERMAN ANTISEMITIC MEDAL

By Henry Grunthal

At a New York numismatic convention in 1985 I acquired a most interesting antisemitic medal which can be described as follows:

FRANKFURT. Silver medal without date by Christian Leberecht Schild. SO GEHT DIE WELDT (so goes the world). Crab carrying globe on its back, CS below. Rev. IHR GOT IST GELD (its God is money). Four money bags resting on altar inscribed: MM-AO-N. (Mammon). The bags are inscribed

IAC (Jacob), MOS (Moses), DVC (ducats), THA (thaler). Seven praying men standing around the altar. Fieweger Catalogue 1883 #200; not in Friedenberg. 37mm. 25.5gr.

The Fieweger Catalogue attributes the medal to Christofer Schneider or Christof Sucro but without any evidence. Schneider was a medallist in Copenhagen during the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century, circa 1678-98. His initials appear on many Danish medals, all of which are quite different in style

*Continued on page 23*

6. Lane-Poole (above n.4) p.1.
7. al-Baladhuri (above n.2) p.80, p.98 note 98.
8. E.W. Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon. London 1863. Vol. 1 p. 1426. Further explained in R. Dozy, Supplement aux Dictionnaires Arabes, Leiden 1881. Vol. I p. 682.
9. Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari. Tarikh al-rasul wa 'l-muluk. Leiden 1881. Vol. III, p. 983, quoted by Ibrahim ve Cevriye Artuk. Istanbul Arkeoloji Muzeleri Teshirdeki İslami Sikkeler Katalogu. Vol. I (1971), p. XXXV.
10. Taima, an oasis in northern Saudi Arabia, had a flourishing Jewish community.
11. Daniel Eustache, *Etudes de numismatique et de metrologie musulmane II*. Hesperia Tamuda 10 (1969) (Edition and translation of al-Maqrizi-Shudur al-ujud fi dikr al-nuqud), p. 116.
12. John Walker. Catalogue of Arab-Sassanian Coins. London 1941. p. CXLIX.
13. Hajjaj ibn Yusuf was governor of all the eastern provinces of the Arab Empire between 75 and 95 H/694 - 714. vide E.v.Zambaur. *Manuel de Genealogie et de Chronologie pour l'histoire de l'Islam*. Hannover 1927. p. 39.
14. Walter J. Fischer, *Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Medieval Islam*. Revised ed. New York 1969. p. XVII.
15. Ibn al-Athir (died 630 H/c. 1232). Al-Kamil, Vol I., pp. 492 ff.
16. al-Maqrizi (died 845 H/1441) Kitab Igħata al-Umma. Cairo 1940, p. 53 ff.
17. John Walker, A Catalogue of Arab-Byzantine and post-reform Umayyad Coins. London 1956. p. LXII.
18. Walker (above n.17), pp. LXII, LXIII, 125.
19. Walker (above n.17), pp. LXII, 104.
20. Walker (above n.17), p.I.V.
21. Daniel Friedenberg, *Jewish Minters and Medalists*. p.5 and p.118 note 8.
22. Walker (above n.17), No.593 ff and notes.
23. Eustache (above n.11) p.116.
24. EP - Dar al-Darb - Ehrenkreutz does not quote his reference for this statement.
25. The Divan of R. Elazar b. Ya'qov ha-Babli. ed. Brody. Jerusalem 5731 (1971) pp. 74, 82, 123. (in Hebrew).
26. ha-Babli (above n.25), p. 123.
27. Avraham Ben-Ya'qov. *The Jews of Babel from the end of the period of the Geonim until the present (1038-1960)*. 2nd ed. Jerusalem 1979. p.39 (in Hebrew), based on Ibn al-Sa i. Al-Jami al-Mukhtasar. Baghdad 1934. pp. 162/63.—See also Fischer (above n.14) p. 133.
28. Ben-Ya'qov (above n.27), p.38.
29. The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela 1160-1173 (Translation Asher), in *Early Travels in Palestine*. Reprint New York 1968, p. 95.

# MOSES AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IN THE THERESIENSTADT CONCENTRATION CAMP

By Jack H. Fisher, NLG  
(All rights reserved)



The currency notes of Theresienstadt present an appearance of official normal paper money. The portrait of Moses with the Ten Commandments, Star of David and facsimile signature of Jakob Edelstein, as the ghetto elder, preserve the image of official Jewish issue. However, the notes were prepared by the Nazi SS as part of a Nazi propaganda effort to have Theresienstadt appear to be a humane resettlement for Jews. The notes with Moses and the Ten Commandments give no clue to the true nature of Theresienstadt in the Nazi plan of the methodical liquidation of Jews.

Each Nazi concentration camp had its own currency system. The interest in the Nazi concentration notes is such that there are many requests for notes and information concerning the notes and the issuing camp authorities (See *The Shekel*, Sept.-Oct. 1983 and Mar.-Apr. 1983).

My reading and research has been of various Nazi concentration camps and the notes issued by them. However, the stories behind the notes of such concentration camps were so horrible that I did not and do not feel up to writing these stories of horror to document the notes issued and used in such camps.

My Theresienstadt note research left such a particularly deep impression on me, along with the interesting and beautiful series of notes that were issued and used there, that I decided to write about the camp and the notes with the attempted objectivity of a numismatic researcher.

It is a definite fact that Theresienstadt notes are collected by collectors and numismatists with interests in the notgeld, Judaica, concentration camps, Germany, World War II and other fields of specialization. The notes of Theresienstadt are beautiful, but the story behind the notes, their origin and use is ugly.

The story had its birth with the public announcement made at Gross Wannsee on Jan. 20, 1942, by Hitler's Gestapo chieftain, Reinhard Heydrich, to the effect that Theresienstadt was being considered as the site for a special ghetto for Jews. This ghetto was to be special, in that the only Jews eligible must have had special qualifications. The necessary qualification groups were:

1. German war veterans of the Jewish faith with severe war incurred disabilities received in the service of Germany.
2. German Jews who had been awarded the Iron Cross First Class or higher military honors for bravery on the field of battle in the military service of Germany.
3. Prominent Jews who had made substantial contributions in the fields of science, government, medicine, art and humanities of sufficient importance and worldwide recognition to have possibly resulted in embarrassing inquiries from other countries in the event such Jews would have disappeared in one of the regular Nazi killing centers.
4. Jews over 65 years of age and/or Jews who literally paid to be admitted in hopes of better treatment than in the other camps.

Theresienstadt was accordingly established as a "resettlement" strategem at the infamous conference at Gross Wannsee as the "final solu-

tion to the Jewish Problem". Reinhard Heydrich was quite proud of this strategy to avoid and parry inquiries concerning the treatment and confinement of Jews.

Heydrich had ordered the approximately 7,000 native inhabitants of the town of Theresienstadt to commence evacuation of their homes starting Nov. 24, 1941. Entire Jewish families from Prague and Pilsen began to arrive in Theresienstadt in January, 1942, even before the normal civilian population had entirely departed the town. The Jews arriving at Theresienstadt thought they would be receiving special treatment, according to the promises of the Nazi Germans, but little did they know then how inhuman this special treatment would be.

The SS Commanders of Theresienstadt, in order of service and succession, were Haupsturmführer Dr. Siegfried Seidl, Haupsturmführer Anton Burger and Haupsturmführer Karl Rahm. These men were all Austrians; all were hand-picked by Adolf Eichmann. This is of particular interest to me at this time in connection with the information and allegations in the news pertaining to Kurt Waldheim. The statements made by him and other Austrians as to the type and extent of the involvement of Austrians with Nazi policies and actions appear to bear intense scrutiny on a case by case basis.

The farce of special treatment and consideration was even carried to the point of the appointment of a Jewish elder to be the nominal head in command to establish and direct policies under the control and direction of the Nazi SS. Three successive Jewish elders served their people as best as possible under the prevailing circumstances. These successive Jewish elders were Jakob Edelstein, Dr. Paul Epstein and Rabbi Nurmelstein.

Heinrich Himmler stated the following in April, 1945 to Dr. Norbert

## Masur of the World Jewish Congress:

Theresienstadt is not a camp in the ordinary sense of the word, but a town inhabited by Jews and governed by them, and in which every manner of work is to be done. This type of camp was designed by me and my friend Heydrich, and so we intended all camps to be.

This little town of Theresienstadt, (Czech, Terezin) with facilities for 7,000 inhabitants prior to their evacuation, actually housed a total of 139,654 Jews from the start of 1942 until the fall of the Reich liberated the survivors. The Jews in Theresienstadt were given classifications by the Nazi Germans, and the number of ghetto prisoners by classification is listed as follows:

Old Reich	42,832
Protektorat	73,608
Austria	15,254
Netherlands	4,897
Slovakia	1,447
Denmark	466
Miscellaneous	1,150
Total	139,654

The classification of Protektorat Jews referred to those placed temporarily in the Theresienstadt ghetto prior to their departure for the gas chambers and ovens of Auschwitz. A steady stream of Jews made this one-way journey in the belief of humane treatment to be received at the hands of fellow human beings. It is noted with revulsion and almost disbelief that of the 139,654 who arrived at Theresienstadt, only 17,320 were still there in May of 1945. Of the deceased, 86,934 were deported for liquidation in the methodical assembly line killing centers, 33,419 died in the Theresienstadt ghetto and 1,981 have never been accounted for and are presumed to have died.

### Special Local Currency

The Nazi SS decided to have a special local currency for the Theresienstadt ghetto. It was concluded that the denominations be one

Krone, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 100 Kronen with the notes to be in various colors with official government quality artwork, color and printing. The currency was to bear the date of January 1, 1943.

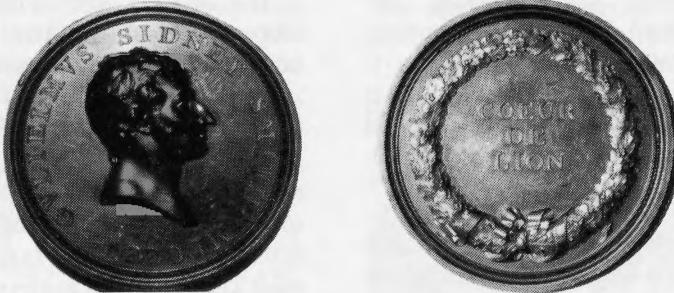
It is difficult to understand the twisted mentality and humor of the Nazi SS authorities who issued such currency bearing a design featuring Moses with the Ten Commandments, the Star of David and the facsimile signature of Jakob Edelstein as the ghetto Jewish elder.

Through such currency the Nazi SS placed Moses as a prominent Jew in Theresienstadt, and mocked the Ten Commandments to the extent of violating them in almost every conceivable and inconceivable manner. These notes survive as a numismatic memorial to the thousands of Jews who inhabited Theresienstadt, who died from inhuman treatment in Theresienstadt or who were later killed in the Nazi killing centers.

Reinhard Heydrich who gave birth to the idea of the Theresienstadt ghetto was born in Halle in Upper Saxony in 1904. He earned the name "The Hangman" while a Deputy Director of the Gestapo. At the age of 17 years he helped found the Deutsche nationale Jugendbund, a forerunner of Hitler's Youth Movement. He was killed by a partisan bomb in May 1942; in reprisal for his death more than 300 Czechs in the town of Lidice were slaughtered.

These notes are a gruesome reminder of the methodical inhumanity man is capable of inflicting on man. I hope that numismatists of the present and future will not have such notes produced by their generation in any part of the world.

Any communications pertaining to this article should be directed to Jack H. Fisher, Attorney at Law, Howard Professional Building Suite AA, 750 Howard Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008.



Thomas Webb's 1805 commemorative medal for Sir Sidney Smith's part in the 1799 siege of Acre.

## AN ACRE SIEGE MEDAL AND RELATED PIECES

By Peter S. Horvitz

Since publication of "The Farhi Brothers and the Sieges of Acre" (*The Shekel*, March-April, 1986, pp. 3-9), new numismatic information relative to that article has become available. Included in this is an important medal which, as far as can be determined, has never been recognized as relating directly to the Acre siege of 1799, though a Sidney Smith medal of 1805 is listed among the works of the medallist Thomas Webb in Leonard Forrer's *Biographical Dictionary of Medallists*.

The Mudie medal, dated 1799 and illustrated and discussed in the previous article, was struck between 1817, the date of the first medal in Mudie's series, a dedicatory piece to George III, and 1820, the date of Mudie's book describing his series of medals. The Thomas Webb medal is dated 1805, and was undoubtedly struck in that year, making it the earlier of the 1799 Acre siege commemoratives.

The medal in question measures 52 millimeters and is struck in bronze. The obverse shows a bust of Sir Sidney Smith facing right and the inscription "GVLIELMVS SIDNEY SMITH MDCCCV". Under the bust is

the signature of the medallist "T. WEBB F." On the reverse the medal bears the inscription "COEUR DE LION" in an oak wreath, a classical symbol of military victory.

At first glance, it might seem that the inscription on the reverse is just intended as a compliment to Smith's personal courage. A quick reference to the career of the man who was first described by this epithet, however, quickly brings into focus the real intent of the medal. That man was, of course, King Richard I of England. It was on July 12, 1191 that Richard Coeur De Lion achieved the greatest military victory of his career—at Acre. The point of the medal, then, is that Smith, like Richard I, had achieved a great victory at Acre.

The comparison of Smith to Richard I was, undoubtedly, in line with Smith's own thinking. Smith saw himself very much as the latest exemplar of the great crusading spirit of the past. Undoubtedly, it was this attitude which made him as a subordinate so difficult to deal with. He seems to have come into conflict with most of his command-

ers, including Lord Nelson. Sir Henry Edward Bunbury, a contemporary of Smith, said of him:

He possessed no great depth of judgement, nor any fixity of purpose save that of persuading mankind, as he was fully persuaded himself, that Sidney Smith was the most brilliant of chevaliers.<sup>1</sup>

One wonders if this medal could possibly have been commissioned by Smith, or, at least, whether he contributed the idea for its design.

In his later life, after his retirement from the Navy and his resettlement to France, Smith organized a make-believe order of crusaders.

During his later years he lived principally in Paris, amusing himself with a fictitious order of 'Knights Liberators' or 'Knights Templars,' which he had formed and of which he constituted himself president. It had for its proposed aim the liberation of Christian slaves from the Barbary pirates; but its efforts seem to have been limited to correspondence.<sup>2</sup>

In regard to this later part of Smith's life, an item which could have possibly originated with Smith, or which was intended for sale to him deserves mention. It is a matrix for a Templar's seal acquired by the author in France. This item originates from the nineteenth century (or possibly very early in the twentieth century).<sup>3</sup>



Templar matrix from the period of Sir Sidney Smith's revival of the order.

The matrix measures 31 millimeters and shows two knights, on one horse, carrying spears and riding right, surrounded by the inscription “+ SIGILLVM: MILITVM: XPISTI:” cut in reverse. The whole design is incused. The piece is silver and has a nail-like handle. The matrix is a forgery or fantasy (for no real Templar seal matrixes survived their persecution) based on a surviving wax impression of the Templar seal of 1259. Such an item would, certainly, have been very appealing to Smith, who, apparently, thought of his group as a revival of the defunct Templars.

Since writing the first article, an additional medal of Muhammad Ali has surfaced which is of particular interest in regard to the subject; it commemorates the battle of Nesib or Nezib, a battle which marked Muhammad Ali's farthest advance as ruler of Syria (then including Eretz Israel).



Rogat's 1840 medal of Muhammad Ali, commemorating the 1839 battle of Nesib.

The medal is gilded copper and measures 51 millimeters. On its obverse it shows a half length fezzed portrait of the Viceroy of Egypt facing right. Its inscription in French is "MEHEMET ALI RÉGÉNÉRATEUR DE L'EGYPTE." or "Regenerator of Egypt." It also bears the same inscription in Arabic. Under the shoulder of the bust it bears the signature of the medallist "E. ROGAT" (Emile Rogat) and the date "1840." The reverse of the medal shows a scimitar, whose handle is decorated with three lion heads, separating the same inscription in French and Arabic, "IL SAIT DÉFENDRE AVEC NOBLESSE L'HONNEUR DE SON PAYS" or "He knows how to defend nobly the honor of his country." On the blade of the scimitar is inscribed "NESIB 1839" in French and Arabic, with the A.H. date 1255 in the Arabic.

Nesib, now called Nizip, is today in southern Turkey; then it was considered part of Syria. It was the site of a battle where Egyptian forces were led by Ibrahim Pasha, Muhammad Ali's son and governor in Syria. The battle was a great victory for Ibrahim; it marked the high-water mark of his and his father's power.

The medal was struck by Muhammad Ali's supporters in France and it was obviously struck before the decline of Muhammad Ali's fortunes later in the year 1840.



Rogat's 1846 medal of Muhammad Ali, commemorating Ibrahim Pasha's trip to Paris.

In 1846, on the occasion of Ibrahim Pasha's visit to France, a new medal was struck using the same Rogat obverse, but with a new reverse, an Arabic inscription in a laurel wreath. The last line of the inscription is the common era date 1846 written in true Arabic numerals. This 1846 piece is known in restrikes.

Readers should also be aware of a medallion in the Dan Friedenberg Collection commemorating the embassy of Sir Moses Montefiore and Adolphe Crémieux in Damascus in 1840. This medallion is illustrated in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* in the article "Damascus Affair."

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Dictionary of National Biography s.v. "Smith, Sir William Sidney," p. 574.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> I would like to thank Brigitte Bedos Rezak of the French National Archives (Paris) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art for examining, identifying, and dating this piece.

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## NUMISMATICS OF HISTORIC ANTI-SEMITISM

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# *Necessity notes recall Australian camps*

By Joel Forman

A few months ago, I was working when a numismatic friend called to tell me about the very rare Hay notes he just purchased.

I didn't recognize the place at all. He explained that Hay was an internment camp in Australia for Jews. As the curator of numismatics at the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, my curiosity was aroused. I was determined to find out as much about the notes as possible.

Fortunately, my daughter Debby was an exchange student in Australia for 11 months, living with a family in Bateau Bay, about 60 miles north of Sydney.

After confirming that a camp did indeed exist at Hay, they set out to find as much information as possible. Eventually they discovered an article in the March 1985 issue of *Australian Coin Review* that devoted space to the Hay experience. The remainder of this article is based upon information obtained from this publication.



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## Refugees fleeing Hitler

The camp at Hay had its genesis with the outbreak of the war in Europe in September 1939. When Hitler assumed leadership in January 1933, many people left Europe to take refuge in Great Britain. Unlike the United States, the status of aliens in Great Britain has always been shaky, especially after the shooting commenced.

By the time France fell in 1940, a wave of hysteria swept Britain about the possibility of a German invasion. A program of internment at the town of Douglas on the Isle of Man began. Many of the internees were Jews who were terrified of being caught by the very forces they only recently escaped from. Word got out that there would be an overseas transfer. Everyone believed they were going to Canada.

Ten days after their ship *Dunera* sailed from Liverpool on July 10, 1940, the destination was announced — Australia. One internee once visited the country and told everyone that it was near the bottom of the map. The trip there was very difficult.

Besides the internees, there were 500 Italian and German survivors of a passenger liner, *Arandora Star*, that was torpedoed a few weeks prior to the departure to the land "down under." Throughout the trip there were many indignities and losses, which resulted in the internees suing the British government and winning a judgment of £80,000.

### Initial fears unfounded

In the afternoon of Sept. 6, the 3,300 pale and emaciated internees, filled with trepidation, sailed into the safety, serenity and beauty of Sydney Harbor. They were met by soldiers in khaki



"Hidden Message" in border design emphasized in lower illustration.

uniforms who gestured to the new arrivals to proceed to several long trains which were on the dock.

To the internees the trains were nasty reminders of the Nazi roundups to who-knows-where. Panic broke out and the internees, in obvious fear of their lives, started running on the signal to move. Needless to say, this astonished the Australian soldiers.

The soldiers signaled the internees to slow down, which caused them to run even faster. The cycle of misinterpretation ceased when the soldiers offered food packages to the terrified internees who gladly accepted them.

Eventually the internees and their guards were put on the trains, and they made their way through the eucalyptus forests. About 30 hours later they arrived at the Hay camp.

It was located just outside the town. Unlike the coast regions, the outback was (and still is) bleak, completely isolated, flat and on a treeless plain. Nothing existed on this burnt, desolate and totally uninhabited land.

This was a far cry from the ship-board rumor of sitting out the war on a tropical island with wave swept beaches, rustling palm trees and beautiful native girls.

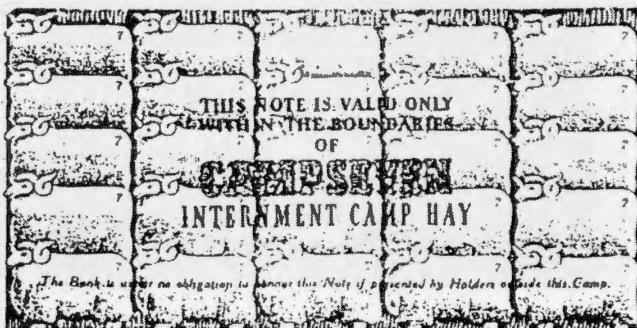
Camp 8 was bordered by reinforced double barbed wire fence with four guard towers equipped with machine guns that were never used. The internees quickly discovered that the seasons south of the equator are reversed. September in Australia is the beginning of spring while January brings the tropical heat.

Later Camp 7 was completed. About 1,000 internees were transferred and for some unexplained reason, contact between both camps terminated. The guards did not interfere with the daily camp life except to conduct two roll calls each day which to the exasperation of the inmates was never correct. There was no desire to escape, for there was no place to go except a lonely, painful demise on the hot plains.

Camp life settled down into a predictable routine. The canteen was stocked. One of the internees was a banker. He devised a system of camp management and salaries.

Since there were infirmed and elderly among the internees, a welfare state was created. This allowed the people who could not work to receive payment from the profits on the sale of goods. The camp suffered from no shortages and help soon arrived.

Their luggage, which the British claimed was lost, showed up. Pressure from religious groups did wonders to ease their lot. Unlike the British, who were cruel at times, the Australians



Reverse of camp note.

treated the internees with respect and gentleness.

With a system devised to run the camp, there was a need to come up with some type of currency. By law, aliens were forbidden to possess legal tender. George A. Teltscher, who designed the 1934 Australian shilling, was responsible for coming up with the camp currency.

### Paper notes

Teltscher was a clever graphic designer who incorporated the humor of the internees into the design. There were three denominations printed: 6 pence in blue, 1 shilling in green and 2 shillings in a brownish red. Several thousand of each type were printed in Hay.

A number of reminders of Camp 7 life were incorporated into the design. The barbed wire compound fence has the name "dunera" and the dates of their voyage interwoven in the wire. The names of prominent inmates are cleverly disguised in the wool of the sheep.

The camp song, sung to the tune of *Auld Lang Syne* — "We're here, because we're here, because we're here, because we're here" — is in the barbed wire border of the notes. All notes are dated March 1, 1941.

All three notes share a common back of 25 sheep and a legend printed across them reading THIS NOTE IS VALID ONLY WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF CAMP SEVEN INTERNMENT CAMP HAY.

On one line near the bottom in small print is THE BANK IS UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO HONOUR THIS NOTE IF PRESENTED BY HOLDER OUTSIDE THIS CAMP.

The faces have the same design except for denomination. The barbed wire runs around the entire perimeter with a large rectangle having a star in each corner, serving as the inner border. Printed just below the top inner border is WILL UPON DEMAND PAY AGAINST THIS NOTE (denomination) LEGAL AUSTRALIAN CURRENCY.

In the lower center of the note cutting the inner border is a sheep in a coat of arms with supporters being a kangaroo left and an emu right. Near the kangaroo's lower back is the place and date of issue, HAY, 1ST MARCH 1941, and the signature of a prominent internee below the date.

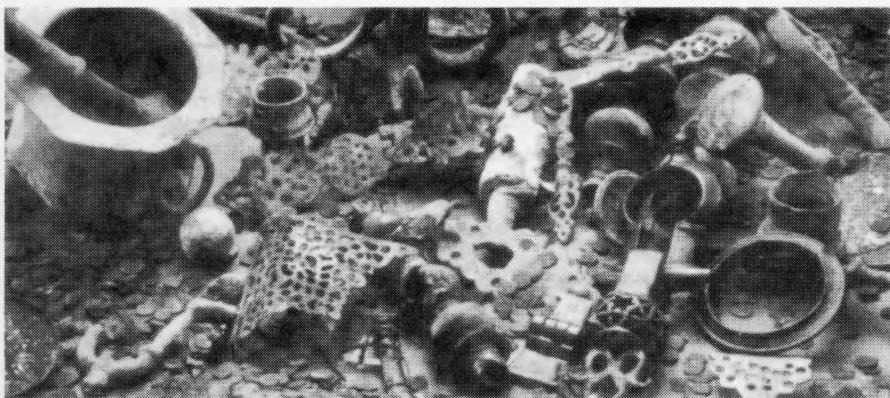
To the right of the emu's tail is MANAGER R. STAHL. Both animals are standing on a ribbon that cuts the barbed wire and has written on it CAMP SEVEN BANK.

The notes circulated within the camp for a short time only. They were confiscated and destroyed by the authorities when it was realized they circumvented Australian law. Some were kept as souvenirs by inmates and guards with fewer than 100 notes of all nine types known to survive.

About 1,000 internees accepted the British government's offer to join the British army. Those who stayed behind were moved to a far more hospitable and civilized environment at Tatura, Victoria. The Hay camp was to be completely abandoned.

Rumors circulated that prisoners of war would be the next inhabitants. Before departing Hay, the internees made a huge mountain of chairs, benches and tables which was topped with an effigy of the swastika. Everything was then torched.

With the war's end, many of the internees remained in Australia.



Some of the coins and other treasures recovered from sunken wrecks and currently on exhibition at the Rockefeller Museum.

## Largest Hoard of Coins Ever Found at Sea Discovered by Haifa University Archaeologists

A cargo from the 15th century Mameluke period, contained the largest horde of coins ever found at sea — a half ton of copper coins minted in Syria.

A remarkable archaeological treasure trove, consisting of the cargoes recovered from three sunken ships by the underwater archaeology team of Ehud Galili and Nissim Shmuel from the University and Shelley Wachsman and Kurt Raveh from the Israel Department of Antiquities, was on exhibition at the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem. Among the objects on display was an unrusty sickle-shaped Canaanite sword from the 14th century B.C.E. with its wooden handle intact.

The oldest cargo, dating from the late Canaanite period, was made up of valuable metals, including ingots of lead, copper and tin. The lead and tin ingots were the oldest ever found anywhere, and are an important contribution to the study of ancient metallurgy. Other items in the cargo included the sword and a well-preserved metallic horse's mouthpiece.

A cargo from the Hellenistic period (4th—2nd centuries B.C.E.) seems to have come from a ship in the scrap metal trade, and included bronze bracelets, jeweller's tools, a scale pan and the broken pieces of a statue.

According to Dr. Avner Raban, Director of the Center for Maritime Studies, these sunken objects are providing scientists with a rare opportunity for cross-cultural study of ancient peoples. "Marine archaeology is a bridge between cultures. We don't speak of Egyptian, Roman or Biblical archaeology," he says. "We speak of Mediterranean archaeology."

Five submerged prehistoric villages have been discovered off Israel's northern coast, just south of Haifa, by archaeologists from the University's Center for Maritime Studies. The villages, dating from the Neolithic period (7000—4000 B.C.E.) were found buried under up to 12 meters of water during one of the Center's ongoing underwater surveys of the sea bottom. According

to Ehud Galili, the survey's director, the villages are thought to be the best-preserved prehistoric remains ever found under water.

"Submerged prehistoric settlements have been found in several places in the world, but never in such quantities and never in such condition," says Galili. "For the first time we found actual buildings made of stone and wood."

Among the most exciting finds were the foundations of a large wooden structure believed to be a granary, a well made from layers of stone and wood, and human skeletons. These discoveries provide archaeologists with new evidence concerning the day-to-day lives of the prehistoric cultures which once flourished around the Mediterranean.

In addition to the villages, the underwater survey also revealed the remains of some 60 ancient ship-

wrecks. These are especially valuable finds for archaeologists because metal and wood are often better preserved under the sea than on land; on land, metal objects frequently are re-used and resmelted while under the sea they remain untampered with; and shipwrecks are practically the only place to find the raw materials, especially metals, before they have been made into tools.

Israel's coastline, with its peculiar physical characteristics (fairly straight with few coves or bays), is a promising area for archaeological finds. For centuries, thick layers of mud and sand protected sunken ships and settlements from oxidation and the waves. As a result, objects well-buried for hundreds or thousands of years, are now being exposed by parting sands after every storm. —From the Newsletter of the American Friends of Haifa University.

### REAPPEARANCE . . .

*Continued from page 11*

from Schild's work. Also, there was relatively little antisemitism in Denmark at that time. Sucro, the other artist suggested as creator of the medal, was not a medallist at all but worked as mintmaster at Stettin (1677-81) under Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg.

There can be only very little doubt about the attribution of the medal to Christian Leberecht Schild who fits very well into the picture. Schild was a medallist, gem and coin engraver, born in 1711 at Harburg. He

was employed at the Frankfurt mint from 1742 on. He died at Sachsenhausen on October 3, 1751. He was a Jew by birth, who adopted the Protestant faith in 1731 and settled in Frankfurt in 1733.

The image of the scavenging crab is an extremely pejorative reference to Jews of the time as well as offensive to Jewish customs. To the best of my knowledge the medal did not show up again for more than 100 years. It might be the possibly unique specimen of the Fieweger collection.

\*Friedenberg, Daniel M. *Jewish Medals from the Renaissance to the Fall of Napoleon 1503-1815*. New York 1970.

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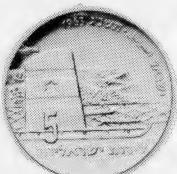
# HOW TO COLLECT AND EXHIBIT ISRAELI MONEY & MEDALS

By Sylvia Haffner Magnus

### CLASSIFICATION — “NAUTICAL”



P-3 Anchor



A-6 Steamship-Ancient Galley



A-10 Lighthouse



SM-62 World Map & Ships



SH10 Ancient Galley



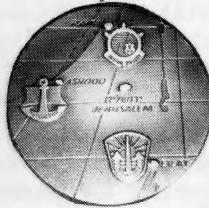
SI-9 Ancient Sailing Vessel



SM-30 Ship-Ancient Vessel



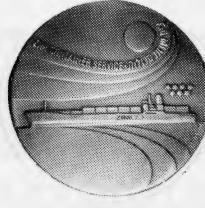
CM-48 Anchor & Port Symbols



CM-27 Port & Symbols



CM-52 Sea & Ships



You like the water? Have we got a voyage for you! You want Sailing Vessels ... Ancient Galleys ... Modern Steamships ... we got 'em!

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There are 32 different nautical items depicted, not including the Zodiac series. They offer: Aquarius the water carrier, and if you choose,

you may include Pisces the Fish and Cancer the Crab. After all, they are found only in the water!

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Most of the items listed are reasonable, outside of the "Seafaring" commemorative coin. The cost ranges from 50¢ to \$15 for most items. A beautiful exhibit can be made from the Nautical Series.



BN-17 Fisherman-gear-ships



SM-39 Ship-Straits-Tiran



CCM-2 Sea & Ship



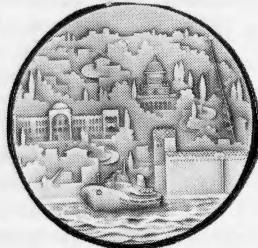
CM-16A Blockade Runner



SM-22 Ship & Immigrants



CM-110 Anchor & Ships



CM-126 Sea & Sailing Ship

## NAUTICAL

### **TRADE COINS**

P-3	1949	One Pruta	Anchor
SH10	1982-85	Ten Sheqalim	Ancient Galley
AHN	1985-	One New Agora	Ancient Galley (As above)

### **COMMEMORATIVE COINS**

A-6	1963	Seafaring	Ancient Galley-Modern Steamship
A-10	1967	Port of Eilat	Sea & Lighthouse
SI-9	1985	Ship of Oniyahu	Ancient Sailing Vessel

### **BANKNOTE**

BN-17	1958	1 Israeli Lira	Fisherman-gear-ships
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### **STATE MEDALS**

SM-22	1963	United Jewish Appeal	Ship & Immigrants
SM-30	1964	S.S. Shalom	Ship & Ancient Vessel
SM-31	1964	Immigrant Blockade Runners	Sea & Blockade Runner
SM-39	1966	Sinai Campaign	Ship-Straits of Tiran
SM-43	1970	Keren Hayesod	Tiny Vessel
SM-62	1979	Pilgrims	World Map & Ships

### **HOLY LAND MEDALS**

HLM-2	1981	Capernaum	Sea of Galilee-Lake Kinneret
-------	------	-----------	------------------------------

### **CITY-COIN-MEDALS**

CCM-1	1965	Ashkelon	Prow of Ancient Galley
CCM-2	1965	Acre	Sea-Fortress-Ship
CCM-3	1965	Tiberias	Fisherman & Ship
CCM-6	1965	Caesarea	Arch & Sea
CCM-7	1965	Jaffa	Promontory & Whale

### **COMMISSIONED MEDALS**

CM-16A	1964	The Gideonim	Blockade Runner
CM-16B	1968	The Gideonim	Blockage Runner
CM-27	1966	Ashdod Port	Port & Symbols
CM-32	1967	Bank of Israel Pensioners	Port of Eilat
CM-44	1970	Zim Israel Navigation Co.	Ship
CM-48	1972	Israel Ports Authority	Anchor & Port Symbols
CM-52	1972	Zim Container Service	Ships
CM-77	1975	Hassneh Insurance Co.	Ships
CM-100	1979	Nathanya Jubilee	Sail Boats
CM-110	1981	Israel-Akko Nautical College	Anchor & Ships
CM-126	1984	Haifa Municipality	Sea & Sailing Ship

### **PRESENTATION MEDALS**

PM-2	1960	Nahariya Local Council	Water Tower & Ships
PM-3	1961	TSVA Haganah L'Israel	Navy Emblem



The Kabbalistic Medal.

## A Kabbalistic Medal from Tiffany's

By Peter S. Horvitz

One does not tend to associate the elegant Fifth Avenue jewelry firm of Tiffany & Co. with Kabbalism. At least once however, between 1907 and 1947, Tiffany's executed for a private customer a most mysterious Jewish medal.

This medal is sterling silver. On the obverse, it bears what appears to be three separate Hebrew words around a central design consisting of strange symbols. This is all surrounded by a single line. The reverse of the medal features a square box, subdivided into 49 smaller boxes, each containing a Hebrew numeral. This side is also surrounded by a single line. All of the designs of the medal were cut into the smooth surface. Careful examination of the details shows clearly that the whole piece was engraved by hand, the designs intentionally blackened. The medal measures 36 millimeters and has an attached ring. Presumably the ring is there so that the medal could be worn about the neck as an amulet.

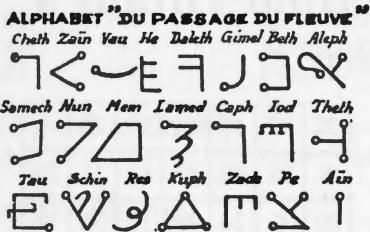
The edge of the medal is stamped "TIFFANY & CO MAKERS STERLING" and an Old English "M." Tiffany employee Irit Kafkafi informed me that the absence of a number on

22	47	16	41	10	35	4
5	23	48	17	42	11	29
30	6	24	49	18	36	12
13	31	7	25	43	19	37
38	14	32	1	26	44	20
21	39	8	33	2	27	45
46	15	40	9	34	3	28

Translation of the *Kâm a* of copper, the reverse of the medal, into Arabic numerals.

the piece indicated that it was a private commission; no records were kept of such commissions. On the other hand, the "M" on the edge indicated that the piece was made under the presidency of the company of John C. Moore, 1907 to 1947.

The reverse of the medal consists of a magic square based on the number 49. This magic square has all the Hebrew numerals from 1 to 49 arranged in such a way so that if the numbers are added diagonally, horizontally, or vertically they will add up to 175. This particular magic square is known as the *Kâm a*, of copper, and is especially associated by Kabbalists with the planet Venus.



Three examples of Kabbalistic alphabets from Robert Ambelain, *La Kabbale Pratique* (Paris, 1951).

The word *Kâmê'a* means magical square. Because such squares were often worn around the neck, this word is the origin of the English word "cameo."<sup>1</sup>

The number 49 is of special significance in Jewish lore. Not only is it seven sevens, but it is connected in a most significant way with the cycle of the Jubilee. "Each statement of the Torah admits of forty-nine correct interpretations."<sup>2</sup> "Forty-nine fiftieths (of the Jews) died during the three days of darkness (in Egypt)."<sup>3</sup> "The flame streamed forth above... (Nebuchadnezzar's) furnace forty-nine cubits."<sup>4</sup> God presented Enoch with a crown "gleaming with forty-nine jewels."<sup>5</sup> And so it goes on.

The center of the obverse contains unusual symbols. Around these symbols are three Hebrew inscriptions, each written as if each was a single word, one above the designs, the

other two below to the right and left. The "word" above consists of three letters, aleph-he-aleph. Now there is no such word in Hebrew. But there can be no doubt what these three letters stand for; they can only represent an invocation to God. All Jewish amulets contain such an invocation, usually through initials. In this case the apparent word must stand for the initials of three common titles of God, "Adonai He Elohim," or something quite similar.

The "word" at the right bottom is *Bne Seraphim*, the name of an angel who in some contexts is considered the governing force of the planet Mercury. However, in other contexts, *Bne Seraphim* is a spirit of the planet Venus.<sup>6</sup> It is undoubtedly in this second guise that the angel appears on this amulet. There is, however, one problem in this inscription. The first letter is written as a *koph* instead of a *beth* and the fifth letter is written as a *daleth* rather than as a *resh*. Both of these would be easy errors to make, but in a more sacred context, in the making of a *Torah*, they would be fatal, but not here. Mistakes in the transcription of text onto metallic amulets are not uncommon and, apparently, are not considered to have any effect on the efficacy of the amulet.

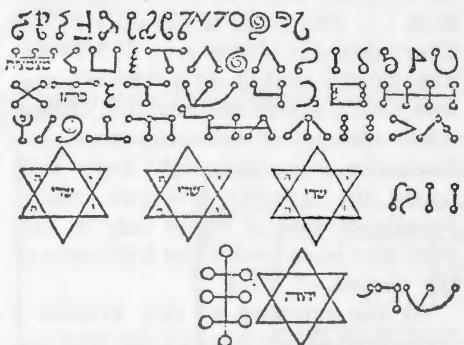
"The engraver (of an amulet) probably copied his inscription from a manuscript... Since few amulets are met with corrected inscription, although errors are frequent, one must conclude... that a corrected amulet was invalid."

Schrire notes that errors are never found on parchment amulets, where the creator of the formula is the scribe himself.<sup>8</sup>

The third word, on the left bottom, is a single word, "Hagiel," also the name of an angel. Hagiel is "the intelligence (or astral spirit guiding the movements of a planet) of Venus

when that planet enters the signs of Taurus and Libra. Hagiel's cabalistic number is 49."<sup>9</sup> The use of Hagiel connected with 49 obviously connects the obverse with the magic square on the reverse. Other connections will soon become clear.

The use of the names of angels is quite common on certain amulets. "Angels have been the object of invocation against the Evil Eye, especially by the Kabbalists, since the Middle Ages.... It is usually Hasidim and mekulalim (persons learned in the Kabbalah) who appeal to angels, other Jews being less circuitous in their approach to Divine Aid and tending to make a direct appeal to God without the necessary intervention of angels at all."<sup>10</sup>



An example of an inscription with Kabbalistic letters from the 1701, Amsterdam printed edition of Eleazar of Worms's *Sefer Raziel*.

In the center of the obverse are a group of strange letter-like symbols, marked by small circles at their extremities. These symbols are variously known as Kabbalistic letters, Kabbalistic characters, or letters from angelic alphabets. These symbols exist in a vast number of forms and varieties. This is because "the ornamented letters have often lost their original shapes almost entirely so that it is sometimes difficult to decipher the original meaning of some of the inscribed letters."<sup>11</sup>

These Kabbalistic letters are of great antiquity and their origin is a

point of great controversy. Ancient amulets have been found bearing these symbols, but these are still of unknown origin. It is not known whether they are from Jewish circles. By the period of the tannaim (from about 20 C.E. to about 200 C.E.), however, these symbols are found on unquestionably Jewish amulets.

"Some scholars derive the origin of these signs from cuneiform writing. Moses Gaster considered that they were variant forms of Samaritan (i.e., Old Hebrew) writings and in support of this opinion he cites Rashi who... also thought they were of Samaritan origin. However, the Samaritan script bears little resemblance to these curious characters. It may well be that these letters are Hebrew writing in code form."<sup>12</sup>

There are a number of Kabbalistic manuscripts and old printed texts which do aid in the interpretation of some inscriptions, but a complete understanding of the system of these symbols is not as yet possible.



A parchment amulet with Kabbalistic letters from "Amulet," Encyclopaedia Judaica.

Fortunately, the three Kabbalistic characters on this particular amulet are decipherable using the charts in E.A. Wallis Budge's *Amulets and Su-*

perstition, which he derived from Dr. E. Papus's *Traité de Magie pratique* (Paris).<sup>13</sup> The very complicated figure at the top stands for the astrological planet Venus, though Budge prints this symbol turned 90 degrees to the left from how it appears on the present amulet. The character to the lower left stands for the first of the planet's two spirits. Perhaps, as it stands by the name, this character is to be associated with the angel Haniel. The character on the lower right is the second of the planet's spirits. Presumably this figure is to be associated with Bne Seraphim, whose name stands by it.

Schrire states that "it is not to be expected that all these bizarre inscriptions can be explained."<sup>14</sup> He gives the example of the *Sefer Raziel*, a work of Eleazar of Worms (c. 1165-1238 C.E., ) which gives "several illustrations of these peculiar forms of letterings, very few of which are explained in the text with any clarity. They must be accepted as part of Kabbalistic amulets and as such, can serve today only to identify the variety of the amulet."<sup>14</sup> "Their presence helps to classify the type of the individual amulet into the Kabbalistic or the non-Kabbalistic."<sup>15</sup>

Kabbalistic letters are usually found exclusively on parchment amulets. "Kabbalistic signs are not frequently found on metallic amulets. The designs that do occur are simple and are often used to divide the space available into compartments, each of which contains a separate inscription."<sup>16</sup> Schrire himself, from his broad survey of the subject, does not illustrate a single amulet with Kabbalistic letters, though his book does illustrate 53 amulets. Nor does he seem to know of any instances where the Kabbalistic letters dominate the design, as they do on the present amulet. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*'s article on "Amulet" illustrates an addi-

tional 22 amulets, none of the metallic examples containing any Kabbalistic letters.

So this piece, unquestionably to be classified as Kabbalistic and astrological, with its obverse dominated by the beautifully formed letters of this strange and ancient alphabet—perhaps derived from cuneiform (man's earliest writing system) or from the Samaritan (Old Hebrew) alphabet or from the angels themselves, as the variant name implies—is peculiar indeed.

While the exact date of this medal is not known, we do know one certain thing about exactly when it was made, and even about the time of birth of the person for whom it was made, when the planet Venus was in its ascendancy. "A planetary talisman . . . had to be made only at the time when the planet was at a favorable phase, that is, at a time when it was rising above the horizon. Otherwise, instead of bringing good fortune, the talisman might very well cause the wearer grievous injury. Finally, it was of value only to him who was born under the influence of the planet."<sup>17</sup>

At the opening of this article, I described this medal as mysterious. Now it is true that an air of mystery surrounds anything to do with Kaballah, but this is not what I had in mind. Kabbalistic amulets, while certainly not common on the market, are not unknown. But all the ones that I have heard of or have read about are from particular milieus, from eastern Europe, from North Africa, from the Middle East, or from the Europe of the Middle Ages. I have never heard of one or seen anything about one from twentieth century America. Amulets are normally the products of village silversmiths, not Tiffany and Co.

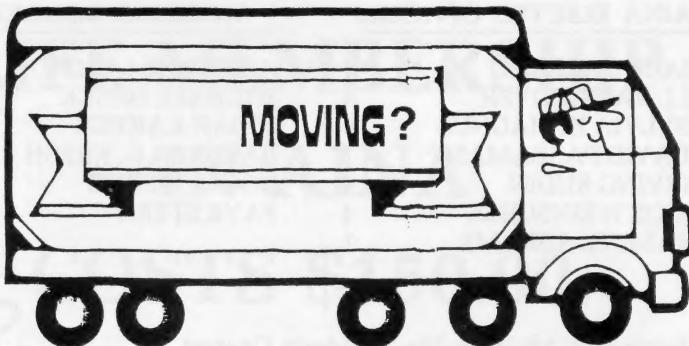
Who ordered this medal? What was its purpose? Why, unlike most metallic amulets, is it dominated by

Kabbalistic letters? Was the design of the medal the work of a professional Kabbalist or is it derived from some scholarly book, like Budge or Papus? Like Sir Thomas Browne's questions concerning the song of the

sirens and the false name of Achilles, these questions are not beyond all conjecture. But perhaps beyond any conjecture, there must always remain the shadow of unresolved mystery.

#### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> E.A. Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Superstitions* (New York, 1978—exact reprint of London, 1930 edition), pp. 390-396.
- <sup>2</sup> Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1968), VI, 284.
- <sup>3</sup> Ginzberg, VI, 139.
- <sup>4</sup> Ginzberg, VI, 416.
- <sup>5</sup> Ginzberg, I, 139.
- <sup>6</sup> Gustav Davidson, *A Dictionary of Angels* (New York, 1967), p. 76.
- <sup>7</sup> Theodore Schrire, *Hebrew Magic Amulets, Their Decipherment and Interpretation* (New York, 1982), pp. 42-43.
- <sup>8</sup> Schrire, p. 86.
- <sup>9</sup> Davidson, p. 132.
- <sup>10</sup> Schrire, p. 105.
- <sup>11</sup> Schrire, p. 9.
- <sup>12</sup> "Amulet," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1972), 912.
- <sup>13</sup> Budge, pp. 391-391.
- <sup>14</sup> Schrire, p. 10.
- <sup>15</sup> Schrire, p. 48.
- <sup>16</sup> Sohrire, p. 47.
- <sup>17</sup> Arthur S. Gregor, *Amulets, Talismans, and Fetishes* (New York, 1975), pp. 42-43.



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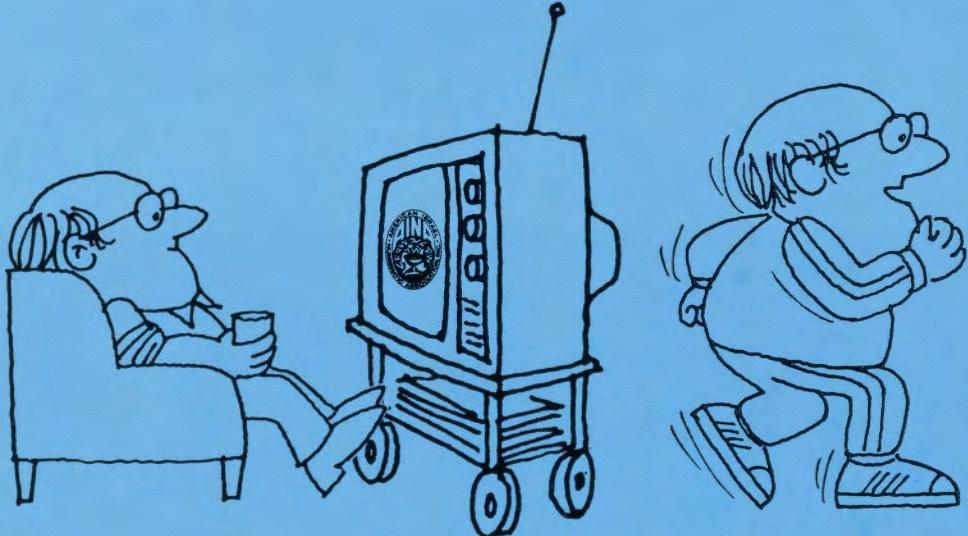
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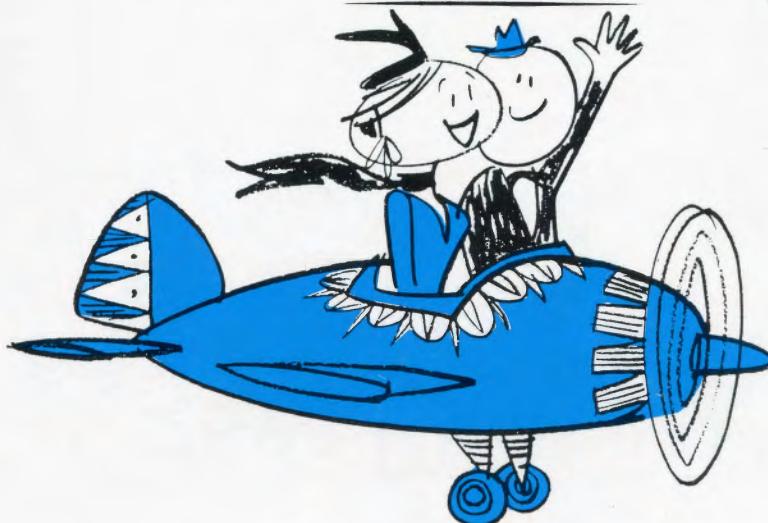
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